Friday January 26, 2024

The Cleveland Museum of Art Acquires 41 New Works

Birdcage Kid (Boy), 2023. Yinka Shonibare CBE RA (British Nigerian, b. 1962). Fiberglass, cotton, globe, brass, steel, replica birds (domestic feathers), wood, rope, metal; 135.5 x

102 x 88.5 cm. Partial purchase from the J. H. Wade Trust Fund and partial gift of Mark Dinner in honor of Dr. Dudley S. Dinner, 2023.158

Contact the Museum's Media Relations Team:
(216) 707-2261
marketingandcommunications@clevelandart.org

A rare masterpiece, surrealist photomontages, and figurative sculpture added to the collection

Cleveland (January 24, 2024)—The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) announces the acquisition of a rare, late Gothic masterpiece by Veit Stoss, 38 gelatin silver print photomontages by Grete Stern, and a figurative sculpture by British Nigerian contemporary artist, Yinka Shonibare CBE RA.

***Jesse*, Veit Stoss**

Rare masterpiece by one of the most celebrated artists of late 15th century Germany

Jesse, c. late 1490s. Veit Stoss (German, c. 1445–1533). Limewood, polychromed; 38.5 x 98 x 26.5 cm.John L. Severance Fund, 2023.156

Veit Stoss was one of the most influential German sculptors and is most celebrated today for his dramatically carved and emotionally intense limewood sculptures. This is the first sculpture by Stoss acquired by the CMA. The work depicts Jesse, described in the Bible as

the father of David who became king of the Israelites; Jesse is therefore regarded as an ancestor of Christ.

“Stoss is the seminal artist of this genre,” said William M. Griswold, CMA director and president. “*Jesse*, the CMA’s first work by Stoss, will serve as an anchor for our German collection. Beginning March 1, 2024, visitors can get their first glimpse in the gallery for German and Austrian Gothic Art (111).”

The sculpture was part of an altarpiece depicting the Tree of Jesse in which the figure of Jesse sleeps at the base of the tree whose topmost branches include Christ and the Virgin.

The position of Jesse’s right hand on his face suggests a gesture of contemplation or deep thought. With his left, Jesse grasps the base of a tree trunk, the entirety of which is now lost. The figure’s body is all but obscured in abundant, undulating drapery, characteristic of Stoss’s style. The head is strikingly large in proportion to the body, and the artist makes clear that the viewer should concentrate on it. Stoss has rendered the sleeping face with an unparalleled sensitivity for a medieval work of art. Jesse’s facial features seem to be completely limp—suggesting repose—and are surrounded by skillfully carved hair and a beard with luxuriant curls.

The sculpture, an extraordinary new discovery in late Gothic sculpture, was part of an altarpiece in a church, possibly in Nuremberg, Germany, which showed the Tree of Jesse in the center. After 1812, the sculpture entered the collection of Prince Ludwig of Öttingen-Wallerstein (Germany, Bavaria). In 1998, it was bought by Rudigier Kunsthandlung, Munich, Germany.

***Sueños (Dreams)*, Grete Stern**

38 gelatin silver print photomontages by feminist and Surrealist

Sueños (Dreams): No. 1: Electrical Appliances for the Home, 1949, printed probably 1970s. Grete Stern (German, 1904–1999). Gelatin silver print, photomontage; 8.3 x 7.1 cm. J. H. Wade Trust Fund, 2023.157.1

Grete Stern's *Sueños (Dreams)* are powerfully moving, seductive, and sometimes humorous photomontages depicting the subconscious anxieties and fears of women. In 1948, Stern—who fled her native Germany in 1933 and relocated permanently to

Argentina—was commissioned to create them to accompany a weekly column, "Psychoanalysis Will Help You," in *Idilio* (Idyll), a pioneering Argentinian women's magazine. Its readers were asked to submit written descriptions of their dreams, which were illustrated by Stern and analyzed by two men. Stern turned to techniques from the avant-garde styles of Dada and Surrealism to convey these journeys into the world of the subconscious. She used photography's association with truth to make impossible situations believable and emotionally engaging. This rare set of subversive, early feminist images constitutes a major monument in the history of photography by women and in the history of feminist art.

"A marvelous acquisition, this is one of only two complete sets, and one of the largest to remain together in the world," said Griswold. "Museum visitors will find these pieces to be intriguing and thought provoking."

***Birdcage Kid (Boy)*, Yinka Shonibare CBE RA**

One of the most celebrated figurative sculptors active today

Birdcage Kid (Boy), 2023. Yinka Shonibare CBE RA (British, Nigerian, b. 1962). Fiberglass, cotton, globe, brass, steel, replica birds (domestic feathers), wood, rope, metal; 135.5 x 102 x 88.5 cm. Partial purchase from the J. H. Wade Trust Fund and partial gift of Mark Dinner in honor of Dr. Dudley S. Dinner, 2023.158

This figurative sculpture by British Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare CBE RA (b. 1962) considers cultural heritage and colonialism, and the denial of civil liberties experienced by members of the African diaspora. This includes mass incarceration, potently symbolized by the birds who fly from their cages. Here, the artist's concerns are intertwined with environmental conservation; each faux bird represents a critically endangered species. Stepping forward, a boy bends his body with the effort of carrying birdcages. The visual signature of Shonibare's artistic practice, his Victorian era–style suit, is tailored from boldly printed "African" or "Dutch" wax fabric. Indonesian in origin, this European-made fabric is now synonymous with West African dress. Embodying the themes of liberty and environmental conservation, Shonibare created replicas of endangered birds whose escape from their antique cages symbolizes hope and freedom from historical restraints. The work incisively considers the impact of race, class, and gender on economic and political relationships between Africa, Europe, and North America. *Birdcage Kid (Boy)* will be on view beginning February 10, 2024, in the gallery for African Art (108).

"After a long, diligent, patient search, years in the making, we have acquired just the right Shonibare piece," said Griswold. "The scale, composition and quality are the perfect combination."